

Welcome to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scam Marshal Newsletter: May 2022

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,172



**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**
Scams Team

Good news: pension criminals jailed after £13m scam

Two criminals have been jailed for their part in a series of scams in which 245 people lost millions of pounds in pension savings.

They tricked people into transferring savings to schemes supposedly investing in property or "truffle trees". More than £13m of pension savings were transferred, and the pair forwarded most of the money to the mastermind of the criminal enterprise. A previous case heard evidence that it was used to live a life of luxury including ski holidays and trips to Dubai.

It is illegal to make cold calls about pensions. You can check on the Financial Conduct Authority register to see if a particular company is accredited (<https://register.fca.org.uk/s/>).

Always seek independent advice. Any suspicious communications should be reported to the FCA on **0800 111 6768**.



Council tax rebate scam: how to avoid being victimised



Criminals are calling UK households and asking them to hand over bank details to receive the government's £150 energy rebate. People are being warned to look out for the scam, with the Local Government Association warning of a recent spate of cold calls offering energy rebates.

How does it work?

Criminals claim to be associated with the council and explain that a refund is due but then ask for your bank details to pay out the £150 rebate. Consumer experts *Which?* said: "According to those who've fallen foul of this scam, handing over these details led to large sums of money being deducted from their bank accounts shortly after the phone call."

Don't be tempted to respond to these texts and emails. If you don't currently pay your council tax by direct debit, you should wait to receive your letter from the council that will explain how to claim the rebate. If you think you've already given your details away to a potential scammer you should contact your bank immediately.

To learn more about scams, visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk

Other News

Good news: romance criminal jailed after conning women out of nearly £20,000



A romance criminal who conned several women out of thousands of pounds and targeted hundreds more has been jailed for 28 months, following a National Crime Agency investigation. A number of aliases were used to contact several women online through dating and social media sites. Of those identified, investigators believe they were conned out of a total of £20,000 and in one case a woman was cheated out of nearly £10,000.

Using a fake identity, the criminal struck up a ten-month relationship with one victim last year through a dating site and persuaded her to lend money to hire drilling equipment for an 'overseas business'. One of the women targeted was terminally ill, with the criminal continuing to pursue her even after she had passed away.

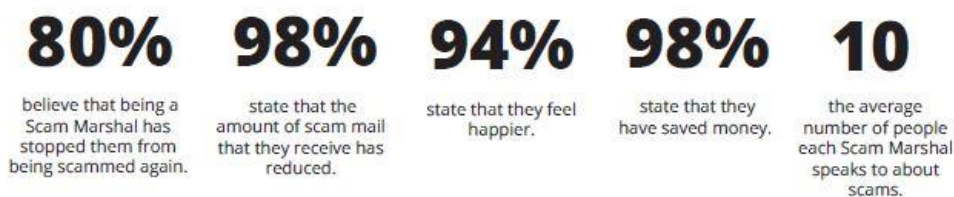
The NCA advises anyone using dating websites to avoid giving away too many personal details when speaking online to someone you've never met in person, as it can lead to your identity being stolen. **No matter how long you've been speaking to someone online and how much you trust them, if you haven't met them in person do not send them any money.** If you think you have been a victim of fraud you should report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 and follow the advice of the Take Five to Stop Fraud campaign.

The importance of Scam Marshals

The National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team have been working hard to increase the amount of incoming mail received into the office which can be used by the NTS Scams Team's investigators to access real time intelligence which can be used to form opinions which can be provided to mail providers to track down and disrupt the criminal processes. Once disrupted, the criminals then look to change tactics. It is imperative that the team continue to receive this real-time intelligence from the Scam Marshals so that the cycle can be complete, and disruption can continue to happen. Please encourage your friends and relatives to sign up as a Scam Marshal! Or alternatively, feel free to send any mail which you feel could potentially be a scam to our Freepost address at: **Freepost, NTSST, MAIL MARSHALS**

Since 1st May 2020, 636 Scam Marshals have been added to the team giving us a total of 2,163. 511 (80%) of these have been signed up via the website and 94 (15%) have been signed up directly by Trading Standards Officers. Despite the increase in Scam Marshals, the team have seen a noticeable decrease in the scam mail received. Please try and encourage anyone who you feel would benefit from this service to sign up as a Scam Marshal today!

What Scam Marshals say after three months



Please get in touch on **01323 463600** if you would like a freepost mail bag sent

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